

The Furniture History Society  
**Newsletter 206**

May 2017



**In this issue:** 'From Castle Howard to Cambridge' | Society News |  
Future Society Events | Occasional Visits | Overseas Events |  
Other Notices | Book Review | Report on the Society's Events

# From Castle Howard to Cambridge

In 2016, the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge acquired a pair of spectacular Roman cabinets for its collection. These remarkable *tours de force*, which had been at Castle Howard in Yorkshire since at least the mid-eighteenth century, were acquired to celebrate the bicentenary of the foundation of the Fitzwilliam Museum in 1816 (see Cover Image).

The cabinets, a near-identical pair, are of architectural form, resembling the façades of contemporary Baroque churches. They are veneered with ebony, over a poplar carcase, and are inlaid with brightly coloured hardstones or *pietre dure*, with gilt-metal mounts. They were almost certainly made in Rome in about 1625, and their high quality and use of luxurious materials mean that they were probably made as a special commission for an important patron. Each cabinet is mounted on a later, English, stand, veneered with mahogany, with carved and gilded ornaments. The cabinets stand 125 cm high without stands, and 222 cm high with them. They are 92 cm wide and 43.5 cm deep.

The cabinets are striking examples of very grand seventeenth-century Roman parade furniture, and are ornamented with elaborate geometrical intarsia of semi-precious stones — which is a distinctly Roman form of the better-known, pictorial, Florentine *pietre dure* that depict flowers,

fruit and birds, and so on, on a black marble ground. A small group of these Roman *pietre dure* cabinets are known, and have recently been discussed in the publication, *Roman Splendour, English Arcadia: The English Taste for Pietre Dure and the Sixtus V Cabinet at Stourhead* by Simon Swynfen Jervis and Dudley Dodd (London, 2015). The Castle Howard cabinets are most closely related to a Roman cabinet bought by William Beckford in 1812, and sold from Lansdown Tower, Bath, in 1841,<sup>1</sup> and another cabinet once at Northumberland House, London, sold in 2014.<sup>2</sup> Other Roman, rather than Florentine, *pietre dure* cabinets in British country house collections include examples at West Wycombe Park, Buckinghamshire (purchased at the Hamilton Palace sale in 1882), Elton Hall, Cheshire (another ex-Beckford piece)<sup>3</sup> and the much more imposing Sixtus V cabinet at Stourhead, Wiltshire.<sup>4</sup> This last cabinet, together with the massive Borghese cabinet, which appeared in the London salerooms in 2016 and is now in the Getty Museum in California,<sup>5</sup> and another large cabinet still in Palazzo Colonna in Rome,<sup>6</sup> are of a much more monumental scale and filigree workmanship than the pair under discussion.

Very little is known about the craftsmen who created these cabinets. Alvar

González-Palacios, who has extensively mined the Roman archives for information on makers of furniture and the decorative arts for this period, cites such names as Innocenzo Toscani, an ebony carver, Giovanni Herman, 'ebanista', Antonio del Drago, who dealt in hardstones, and Remigio Chilholz, a cabinet-maker who worked for the Borghese and other noble families, often with *pietre dure*.<sup>7</sup> Other craftsmen employed in this line of work include Giovanni Sigrist, Giovanni Falgher and Niccolo Cavallino. A surprising number were foreigners, such as Gaspare Vanulese, a Fleming, Hans Keller, a Nuremberg-born silversmith and worker of precious stones, and Giovanni van Santen, called Vasanzio, who had a workshop on the via Giulia where he 'made ebony cabinets inset with many jewels'.<sup>8</sup> There also seems to have been a thriving secondary market for precious cabinets; in 1613, Pope Paul V bought a cabinet 'made from different stones, gems and other things' from the Ceoli family for 3,500 *scudi* as a present for his nephew, Cardinal Scipione Borghese. A new stand, enriched with *pietre dure*, was commissioned for this cabinet from Pompeo Targone, at the cost of an additional 2,000 *scudi*.<sup>9</sup>

The Castle Howard cabinets are unusual in being a matching pair, and for their very distinctive repetition of brilliant blue and red stones. Although each cabinet contains many drawers, their principal function must have been as a splendid vehicle for the display of brightly coloured, polished, lapidary rarities and gilded bronzes. By contrast, the sides of the cabinets are

soberly finished in fine grained wood, with pewter stringing. Luxurious and showy pieces of furniture, these cabinets were probably kept in the innermost, private apartments of their owners — the 'cabinet' — where only the most important guests were received.

Each cabinet is supported on six gilt-bronze feet in the form of crowned, crouching eagles, probably the crest of their original owner (Fig. 1). This supports a narrow plinth inlaid with pinkish Sicilian jasper, and a frieze decorated with alternating, book-matched slices of carnelian, agate and lapis lazuli cut in geometrical shapes. The middle part of the façade of each cabinet is divided into three sections by projecting pilasters formed of exceptionally finely modelled and cast gilt-bronze male and female caryatids, in *contrapposto* poses, bearing capitals sprouting rams' heads. The central section has a broken pediment supporting gilt-bronze putti and encloses an arched niche of architectural form, elaborately inlaid with jaspers, carnelian and lapis in a cartouche pattern beneath a shell motif. This section is hinged and opens by means of a secret lock-plate, cleverly hidden behind a sliding capital, to reveal three drawer fronts. The two flanking 'bays' of the cabinet front are composed of six drawers, three on each side, faced with coloured stones, with ornamental lock-plates in gilt metal. The outermost caryatids support gilt-bronze vases. An 'attic' storey contains two more drawers, again with book-matched geometrical hardstone inlay, surmounted by a narrow frieze inlaid with striped fossil wood. The cresting of each



Fig. 1 Detail of the cabinet.  
© The Fitzwilliam Museum,  
Cambridge

cabinet is formed of a high, pedimented, centrepiece inlaid with coloured stones, flanked by scroll volutes. These and the mouldings of the drawers and plinths of the various bronzes are defined by pewter stringing. The parapet of each of the cabinets are surmounted by three gilt-bronze statuettes, of *Fortitude* flanked by *Prudence* and *Charity*, with two figures of reclining putti on the broken pediments.<sup>10</sup>

When they were sold by Sotheby's in 2015, it was suggested that the Castle Howard cabinets were originally made for the Borghese family, the family of Pope Paul V.<sup>11</sup> This identification was supported by a 1717 description of the Villa Borghese by the Swedish traveller Nicodemus

Tessin, which mentions '[...] deux petits Cabinets de pierre de touche qui parroisent être fait d'ebene', and the gilt-bronze eagles were interpreted as the heraldic device of the Borghese family.<sup>12</sup> However, Tessin's description of the pair of sombre 'touchstone' (black marble or *pietra de paragone*) and ebony cabinets in Villa Borghese does not in any way conjure up the brilliantly coloured Castle Howard cabinets, and the Borghese eagles, which are invariably accompanied by Borghese dragons, are not crowned as are the twelve gilt-bronze eagles which support the two cabinets.

Perhaps the most prominent noble family who have *crowned* eagles as their

crest are the d'Este, hereditary Dukes of Modena and Ferrara (Fig. 2).<sup>13</sup>

Francesco I d'Este, Duke of Modena (1610–58), is a possible candidate as the owner or recipient of these cabinets, as he was an avid patron of the arts and had many Roman connections, having three grand Roman wives in succession — Maria Caterina Farnese in 1631, her sister Vittoria Farnese in 1648, and Lucretia Barberini in 1654. This last marriage sealed a reconciliation agreed a few years before between the d'Este and the Barberini — Francesco I had earlier sided with Spain in its dispute with the Barberini pope, Urban VIII. The truce was commemorated by the splendidly hirsute bust of Francesco I, carved by Urban VIII's jealously guarded favourite sculptor, Gian-Lorenzo Bernini, of 1650–51, and doubtless other gifts and concessions were exchanged. This seems to be a possible context for these two great presentation trophy cabinets, which, even if they were made in *c.* 1625, could have been customized for presentation, possibly as grand marriage coffers, with the addition of d'Este crest eagle feet.

After Duke Francesco's death in 1658, ownership of the cabinets could have passed to one of the succession of d'Este cardinals who lived on at the Villa d'Este at Tivoli, although the family fortunes declined dramatically after 1695, and the Villa was being gradually emptied of its treasures by the early eighteenth century — and was finally cleared and the remainder sent to Modena in 1751.

Therefore, it is quite possible that the pair of cabinets could have been purchased then by the 4th Earl of Carlisle, while on his second Grand Tour, in Rome in 1738–39.

Henry Howard, 4th Earl of Carlisle, was an omnivorous collector, with a pronounced taste for cabinets and tables made of coloured marbles, many of which were acquired through the agency of the dealers, Francesco Ficorini and Belisario Amadei.<sup>14</sup> These Grand Tour trophies made their way back to Castle Howard, where, in 1745, Henrietta, Countess of Oxford, noticed 'three very fine cabinets'.<sup>15</sup> Horace Walpole, who accounted the 4th Earl 'a great virtuoso', visited in 1772, noting, 'all over the House are fine busts, urns, columns, Statues, & the finest collection in the World of antique tables of the most valuable marble, & some of old Mosaic, and one of Florentine inlaying. There are two cabinets of the same work & materials'.<sup>16</sup> These are almost certainly the

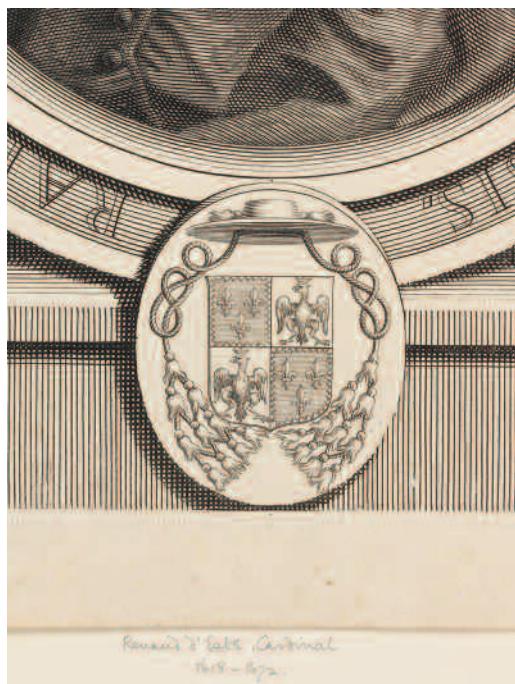


Fig. 2 The d'Este coat of arms, detail from an engraved portrait of Cardinal Rainaldo d'Este, showing the crowned d'Este eagles.  
© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Castle Howard cabinets — no distinction then being made between Roman and 'Florentine work'. By displaying them with his Grand Tour purchases of antique statues, busts and vases, columns and slabs of precious marbles, bronzes, gems and Old Master pictures, Lord Carlisle evidently sought to conjure up in Yorkshire an evocation of the grand Roman *palazzi* he had admired on his two tours of Italy. It is possible that Carlisle originally intended the cabinets to house his celebrated collection of antique gems, many of them obtained through the agency of the agent Philipp von Stosch, although in fact these remained packed in trunks in his London townhouse.<sup>17</sup> One of the cabinets is probably that recorded in the Earl and Countess's own apartments on the 4th Earl's death in 1758, while the other may be the one recorded in the State Drawing Room, 'on a carv'd Gilt Frame with a Green Baze cover'.<sup>18</sup> By 1787, a guidebook notes that 'In the closet [part of the Drawing Room enfilade] are two most curious cabinets formed of precious stones'.<sup>19</sup>

The reference to a 'Carv'd Gilt Frame' and its baize cover suggests that the cabinets were equipped with expensive carved and gilded stands from an early date, probably shortly after their arrival in England (Fig. 3).

The present stands are made of rosewood with parcel-gilt ornaments. Each stand has two turbanned caryatid term supporters of deliberately archaic or possibly Egyptian form, with raised arms, as if supporting burdens. Between them runs a broad Greek key frieze, while gilded Apollo-like masks emerge from

sunbursts on the back panel. The stands are mounted on four lion's paw feet. Sotheby's, in their 2015 catalogue entry, state that the present cabinet stands or 'frames' were probably made to the design of Charles Heathcote Tatham for the 5th Earl of Carlisle around 1801–12.<sup>20</sup> Tatham, an influential neo-classical architect and designer, had met the 5th Earl in Rome and was later employed to remodel the interiors of the West Wing at Castle Howard, which had remained incomplete since the 1750s. The Castle Howard cabinets were certainly displayed on their present stands in the new Long Gallery by 1811, together with a similar, but less elaborate pair of cabinets.<sup>21</sup> Here they stood, flanking the archways in the central Octagon, until the mid-nineteenth century, when they were moved to the State Bedchamber. However, the cabinets and their distinctive stands are not referred to or illustrated in Tatham's very detailed publication, *The Gallery at Castle Howard* of 1811.

Tatham is in many ways a plausible designer for the cabinet stands. He was certainly active in the Long Gallery at Castle Howard, where the furnishing firm of Marsh and Tatham (C. H. Tatham's brother) supplied pelmets, curtains and cornices. Moreover, these curtains pick up the Greek key motif used on the frieze of the stands, and a plate depicting a caryatid figure closely resembling those that support the Castle Howard cabinets is in Tatham's *Etchings representing the best examples of ancient ornamental architecture, drawn from originals in Rome, and other parts of Italy, during the years 1794, 1795 and 1796* (1799).<sup>22</sup> However, the stands of the Castle



Fig. 3 Detail of cabinet stands. © The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

Howard cabinets do not resemble the other Tatham-designed furniture or fittings, having a heavy, succulent splendour akin to the work of William Kent and his followers. Several authorities have suggested that some of the carved and gilded elements — the caryatids and the masks — are salvaged from the earlier, eighteenth-century cabinet stands, but this is not borne out by physical examination of the pieces themselves.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, a group of very similar caryatid-supported stands for cabinets and coffers exist in British country-house collections. Identical giltwood caryatid figures support a pair of Boulle marquetry coffer stands at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire,<sup>24</sup> and another supports a stand for a Boulle chest at Blenheim Palace, which has a provenance going back to the dispersal of the 1st Lord Gwydir's

collection at Grimsthorpe Castle in 1829.<sup>25</sup>

There is also another Boulle coffer stand of this form in the Getty Museum in California,<sup>26</sup> and another stand was offered for sale from the Robert de Balkany Collection in 2016 (Fig. 4).<sup>27</sup> The original model must be seventeenth- or eighteenth-century French: in the sale of the Parisian dealer Antoine Alexandre Dubois on 20 December 1785, a pair of Boulle coffers had stands 'supporté par quatre consoles à figures de femme avec entre jambes'.<sup>28</sup>

Could it be, then, that the Castle Howard cabinet stands were made for the 4th Earl of Carlisle shortly after their arrival in England, in about 1740, and are much earlier than we originally thought? A sophisticated London cabinet-maker such as Benjamin Goodison (d. 1787), who operated from the Golden Spread Eagle in Long Acre, might have modelled the new



Fig. 4 Stand from the Robert de Balkany Collection. © Christie's Images, 2016

stands on opulent Boulle examples already in circulation, substituting the metal and tortoiseshell inlay with the striking combination of mahogany and parcel-gilt carved wood.<sup>29</sup> Goodison specialised in opulent carved and gilded furniture, such as the pair of chests commissioned by Sir Thomas Robinson for nearby Rokeby Hall, Yorkshire, in about 1730, now in the Royal Collection (Fig. 5).<sup>30</sup>

These have many resonances with the Castle Howard cabinet stands, not least the combination of mahogany and giltwood, and the bold Greek key frieze. Robinson was, of course, the 4th Earl's brother-in-law, as well as his architect and adviser at Castle Howard, completing the West Wing after the death of Vanbrugh. Such a commission would also be roughly contemporaneous with Henry Hoare II's 1742 order from Goodison's principal rival, John Boson, of a carved and gilded stand for the Sixtus V cabinet at Stourhead.<sup>31</sup> Clearly, there is more work to

be done to elucidate the history of these cabinets and their stands in the archives in Rome, Modena and Yorkshire.

The cabinets and stands remained at Castle Howard until their sale, with other Howard heirlooms, by Sotheby's in London on 8 July 2015, lot 20, where they were bought by a European collector. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art temporarily barred the cabinets from export, on the grounds of their outstanding aesthetic importance and their significance to the study of furniture, to give national institutions a chance to match the purchase price.<sup>32</sup> The Fitzwilliam Museum immediately expressed an interest in acquiring the cabinets, raising £1.265 million from a combination of our own funds, donations from supporters, a grant from the Art Fund, and a £700,000 grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, before the temporary export stop expired on 19 July 2016.<sup>33</sup> Cleaned, repaired and consolidated by conservator Robert Williams, the cabinets were unveiled on 10 August 2016, at an all-day event to celebrate Lord Fitzwilliam's 200th birthday.

The Fitzwilliam Museum had long wanted to acquire a major Italian hardstone cabinet for its collection. In 1990, it mounted a public appeal to purchase the celebrated Badminton cabinet. This failed — it is now in the Liechtenstein Collection in Vienna — as did a spirited attempt to acquire at auction a fine ivory table cabinet, made in Augsburg in c. 1660, and inset with Florentine *pietre dure* plaques — which ended up in the Rijksmuseum in

Fig. 5 Attributed to Benjamin Goodison, chest, c. 1730, one of a pair for Sir Thomas Robinson for Rokeby Park, Yorkshire.  
© HM The Queen and the Royal Collection Trust



Amsterdam.<sup>34</sup> However, in 2014, the Fitzwilliam Museum successfully purchased the 'Ballyfin' cabinet at Bonhams' auction, the ebony 'pair' to the ivory cabinet we had missed, which is not only inset with Florentine *pietre dure* plaques and gilt-bronze mounts, but is one of the few pieces of seventeenth-century furniture that is signed by its maker, Elias Bosscher.<sup>35</sup> This fine Augsburg cabinet, which boasts a remarkable number of ingenious and well-hidden secret drawers, provides a fitting context for the much larger Roman cabinets from Castle Howard.

The Fitzwilliam Museum has a remarkably good and representative collection of furniture, ranging from Italian *cassoni*, to work by a wide range of twentieth-century makers. Much of the collection is displayed in the galleries, alongside paintings, sculpture and

decorative art of the period, a tradition first established by Sir Sydney Cockerell, Director of the Museum in the 1920s. The Fitzwilliam Museum already owned important seventeenth-century cabinets by Pierre Gôle and André Charles Boulle (on AIL allocation in 2010), the latter with a curious stand in the Egyptian taste that has similarities to the Castle Howard cabinet stands. The Museum's splendid Roman Baroque console table, purchased from Mentmore Towers in 1977, is another comparable object in the collection, as is a distinguished group of Italian neo-classical furniture on loan from the Frua-Valsecchi Collection. As a University museum we place a special emphasis on using our collections for teaching and research, and the cabinets, now prominently displayed in the Founder's Gallery, are already being used for teaching classes on themes ranging from the history of collecting to

geology. Just over 200 years ago, in 1816, Richard, 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion left his *alma mater* his collections, which were particularly rich in Italian pictures, including masterpieces by Titian, Veronese and Palma Vecchio. Since then, countless gifts, bequests and purchases have made the Fitzwilliam Museum an extraordinary treasury of art. The two great cabinets from Castle Howard further enrich this array, and are a coup worthy of the Museum's bicentenary.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Victoria Avery, Simon Swynfen Jervis, Leela Meinertas, Wendy Phillips, Helen Ritchie, Orlando Rock and Anastasia Tennant.

TIM KNOX

- 11 *Treasures*, p. 128.
- 12 Nicodemus Tessin, *Traicté de la décoration intérieure* (1717), edited by P. Waddy (Stockholm, 2002), p. 261.
- 13 'Azure an eagle argent crowned or.'
- 14 *Treasures*, pp. 128 and 131.
- 15 'Account of the Visit of Henrietta Countess of Oxford to Castle Howard in April 1745', MS at Welbeck Abbey.
- 16 'Horace Walpole's Journals of Visits to Country Seats etc', *Walpole Society*, XVI (1927–28), 72.
- 17 Ex inf. Orlando Rock.
- 18 Castle Howard Probate Inventory, 1759.
- 19 *A New Display of the Beauties of England* (London, 1787), 2 vols.
- 20 *Treasures*, pp. 134–35.
- 21 See John Jackson's *View of the Long Gallery at Castle Howard*, 1811. Castle Howard Collection.
- 22 Ex inf. Leela Meinertas, V&A.
- 23 Ex inf. Robert Williams, conservator, who repaired the cabinets in 2016.
- 24 Illustrated in John Cornforth, *London Interiors* (London, 2000), p. 69 at Devonshire House in London in 1919, and in The Duchess of Devonshire, *Chatsworth: The House* (London, 2002), p. 88, *in situ* in Chatsworth.
- 25 *Treasures*, pp. 134–35.
- 26 Gillian Wilson, *Baroque and Régence: Catalogue of the J Paul Getty Museum Collection* (Los Angeles, 2008), p. 64.
- 27 Robert de Balkany Collection Rome and the Côte D'Azur, Christies, London, 22–23 March 2016, lot 71.
- 28 Wilson, *Baroque and Régence*, p. 59.
- 29 Orlando Rock first suggested Benjamin Goodison as the author of the Castle Howard Cabinet stands.
- 30 RCIN 4649, Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/themes/exhibitions/the-first-georgians/the-queens-gallery-buckingham-palace/a-pair-of-chests>.
- 31 Jervis and Dodd, p. 63.
- 32 <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/sites/default/files/download-file/Export%20Objects%20Cultural%20Interest%202015-16.pdf>, pp. 42–43.
- 33 Acquired by the Fitzwilliam Museum in 2016 with grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the Art Fund, the John Armitage Charitable Trust, the Drawing Matter Trust, a bequest from Dr Peter Walker and several private benefactors.
- 34 BK 1999.85. 'An Augsburg showpiece', Annual report, Rijksmuseum Amsterdam (1999), pp. 56–57.
- 35 Bonhams, London, 5 December 2014, lot 20.

# Society News

## Obituary

DR RUDOLF HERMANN WACKERNAGEL  
1933–2017

Rudolf Wackernagel ('Rudi' to his friends) died on 21 February 2017, his eighty-fourth birthday. From a notable Swiss family of scholars (Jacob Burkhardt was his great-grandmother's cousin) and with an Irish grandmother, he was one of the Society's most distinguished members. He had a double career, working as a painting conservator at the Niedersächsisches Landesgalerie in Hanover, and then in Munich, first at the Bayerisches Nationalmuseum, then at the Stadtmuseum, and finally, until his retirement in 1997, at the Lenbachhaus, where he became the leading authority on Kandinsky's techniques. But for members of this Society he will be remembered for his magisterial thesis, *Der Französische Krönungswagen* (Berlin, 1966) and for his great article, 'Carlton House Mews: The State Coach of the Prince of Wales and of the Later Kings of Hanover. A Study in the Late-Eighteenth-Century "Mystery" of Coach-Building' in *Furniture History*, 31 (1995). His crowning achievement was the massive two-volume *Staats- und Galawagen der Wittelsbacher* (Stuttgart, 2002), a catalogue of the wonderful collection of the Marstallmuseum at Schloss Nymphenburg outside Munich, where he generously deposited part of his

own extensive and systematic archive on coaches and carriages, the main bulk of which he gave to the equivalent institution in Vienna, the Kaiserliche Wagenburg. His help and inspiration is acknowledged in virtually every serious publication on coaches published in Europe in the last fifty years, such as, for example, Astrid Tydén-Jordan, *Kröningsvagnen* (Stockholm, 1985) and Julian Munby, 'Queen Elizabeth's Coaches: The Wardrobe on Wheels', *Antiquaries Journal*, 83 (2003). He continued active and productive to the end, recent publications including contributions to the catalogue of the coach museum at Schloss Auerstedt, housing the coaches and carriages of the Grand-Dukes of Sachsen-Weimar and Eisenach (Weimar and Munich, 2011) and a major article, 'Braut-Kobel der Hedwig, Tochter K. Kasimirs v. Polen, von 1475: Vom Reisen im spätem Mittelalter — zum Fahren in der aufkommenden Neuzeit', in Ernst Pöschl (ed.), *Ein Gulden Wagen macht Staat, Schriften zur 'Landshuter Hochzeit 1475'*, 7 (2016). The study of coaches and carriages naturally attracts many whose primary interests are technical or hippological, but Rudi, on the other hand, while being fully master of the technology of his subject, saw it as his mission to introduce the skills and knowledge of the art historian to the understanding and appreciation of these — in many cases — great and complex

works of art. Our condolences go to his widow, Bettina, a distinguished musicologist.

SIMON SWYNFEN JERVIS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Who was delighted to discover that in winter 1838–39 the teachers at the Philosophy Faculty of Basel University included, alongside Dr Wilhelm Wackernagel, Rudi's great-grandfather, Dr William Marriott, his own great-great-grandfather, the former's courses including one on Walther von der Vogelweide, the latter's one on Shakespeare's *King Lear*. Rudi possessed a printed programme. Small world.

## Hosted by The Frick Collection

FRIDAY 27 OCTOBER 2017

The Furniture History Society and The Frick Collection welcome submissions from PhD students, post-doctorates, and emerging museum scholars for a symposium on European and British furniture history, as well as on historical interiors in the United States and abroad. Topics relevant to the Frick's distinguished collection of European furniture or Gilded Age settings are particularly encouraged.

Applicants are requested to send a current C.V. and 300-word abstract outlining the topic of a twenty-minute paper to [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) and [academicprograms@frick.org](mailto:academicprograms@frick.org) by 18 June 2017.

## SAVE THE DATES

### Annual Lecture, Society of Antiquaries, London

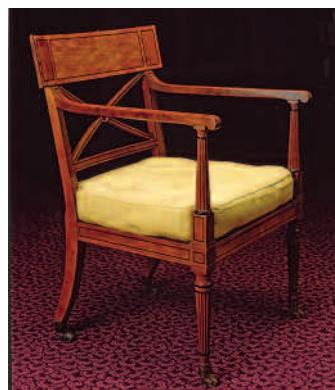
TUESDAY 31 OCTOBER 2017

6 PM FOR 6.30 PM START

Judith Goodison will speak on Thomas Chippendale junior.

Further details to follow in the August *Newsletter* and on the website:

[www.furniturehistorysociety.org/events](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org/events)



Armchair by Thomas Chippendale junior from the Picture Room at Stourhead, Wiltshire

### Annual General Meeting & Works in Progress

SATURDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2017

Please note that this year the meeting will be held at the Guildhall in Bath and will be followed by a furniture-orientated tour led by curators Tom Boggis and Catrin Jones at the Holburne Museum. Further details to follow in the August *Newsletter* and on the website: [www.furniturehistorysociety.org/events](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org/events)

# Future Society Events

## Bookings

For places on visits please apply to the Events Secretary, Anne-Marie Bannister, Bricket House, 90 Mount Pleasant Lane, Bricket Wood, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL2 3XD (tel. 07775 907390), with a separate cheque for each event, using the enclosed booking form. Where possible, joining instructions will be dispatched by email, **so please remember to provide your email address if you have one. There is no need to send an SAE if you provide a clearly written email address.**

Applications should only be made by members who intend to take part in the whole programme. No one can apply for more than one place unless they hold a joint membership, and each applicant should be identified by name. If you wish to be placed on the waiting list, please enclose a telephone number where you can be reached. Please note that a closing date for applications for visits is printed in the *Newsletter*. Applications made after the closing date will be accepted only if space is still available. Members are reminded that places are not allocated on a first come, first served basis, but that all applications are equally considered following the closing date.

Please note the Events email address:  
[events@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:events@furniturehistorysociety.org)

## Cancellations

Please note that no refunds will be given for cancellations for events costing £10.00 or less. In all other cases, cancellations will be accepted up to seven days before the date of a visit, but refunds will be subject to a £10.00 deduction for administrative costs. Please note that in the rare instances where members cannot pay until the day of a visit, they will still be charged the full amount for the day if cancelling less than seven days before the visit, or if they fail to attend. This is necessary as the Society has usually paid in advance for a certain number of members to participate in, for example, a tour/lunch. Separate arrangements are made for study weekends and foreign tours, and terms are clearly stated on the printed details in each case.

## Weekend Visit to Edinburgh

**THURSDAY 12 OCTOBER (EVENING)**

**– SUNDAY 15 OCTOBER 2017**

King George IV described the upper library as 'the finest drawing room in Europe', when he visited the then newly completed Edinburgh Signet Library in 1822. A visit to the library, home of The Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet

— an ancient association of Scottish lawyers — is planned for the FHS Autumn Study weekend. The Library contains its original furniture and is rarely open to visitors.

Electric light has not yet been installed in the 1820s Halls of the Speculative Society, where drinks will be served and FHS members will be able to study furniture by William Trotter made for the building, part of the Old College of Edinburgh University. The Society, one of the oldest debating and literary groups in the world, was started in 1764 and continues today. This is another door rarely open to visitors.

At magnificent Dalmeny House, by kind permission of Lord Dalmeny, the FHS will be able to study the splendid Rosebery and Mentmore collections of furniture. Dalmeny is a Gothic revival mansion, designed by William Wilkins and completed in 1817.

Hopetoun House is billed as Scotland's finest stately home. The family home of

the Marquess of Linlithgow, it is run as a charitable trust in order to preserve the house for the future. Hopetoun was designed by Sir William Bruce between 1699 and 1707, but is considered to be the masterpiece of William Adam, who greatly enlarged the building in 1721–48. The grand interiors were finished by his sons, Robert and John.

Other house visits for the weekend include a morning at Newhailes, a seventeenth-century Palladian mansion, with a lavish interior, now run and carefully preserved in as original a condition as possible by the National Trust for Scotland. The FHS will also tour the National Museum of Scotland's Design Gallery, followed by a special visit to their large furniture store.

The tour is led by Professor Edward Hollis, with Kate Dyson.

As the tour starts early on the morning of Friday, 13 October, rooms have been booked at the Hilton Edinburgh Grosvenor in the city centre for three nights from the Thursday, when a furniture lecture is planned in the early evening.

Members should register interest with the Events Secretary. Further information will be supplied in due course.



Halls of the Speculative Society

# Occasional Visits

## Private Tour of Recent Acquisitions and Loans, Fitzwilliam Museum, University of Cambridge

MONDAY 15 MAY 2017  
10.30 AM–1 PM APPROX.

This visit was advertised in the February 2017 *Newsletter*, and is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

## Private Visit to the Home of James Joll, Pewsey, Wiltshire and the Merchant's House, 132 High Street, Marlborough, Wiltshire SN8 1HN

MONDAY 12 JUNE 2017  
10.30 AM–3.30 PM APPROX.

This visit was advertised in the February 2017 *Newsletter*, and is now fully subscribed. Please contact the Events Secretary if you would like to go on the waiting list.

## Private Visit to Madresfield Court, Madresfield, Malvern WR13 5AJ and Croome Court, near High Green, Worcester, Worcs. WR8 9DW

THURSDAY 6 JULY 2017  
10.30 AM–4 PM

Madresfield Court is a moated stately home with its origins in the 12th century. It has never been occupied other than by one family, the current generation being the 29th. It is set in a most attractive location, nestling beneath the Malvern Hills. Members will enjoy the collection of furniture, which comprises pieces of Boulle and Continental furniture acquired in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as well as an extensive collection of portraits, paintings and porcelain. A highlight will be the richly decorated Chapel, assumed to be the model for Evelyn Waugh's *Brideshead*, and the carvings in the Library, which are the work of members of the Arts and Crafts movement, of which there are many examples in Madresfield Court.

In the afternoon we will visit Croome Court, set within a restored 'Capability



Madresfield Court

Brown' landscape. Although some of the original furniture left the house many years ago, and is now found in museum collections in Britain and America, the fine Adam interiors remain and are the subject of current conservation work by the National Trust.

**COST: £60 (INCLUDING LUNCH)**

**LIMIT: 20**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
MONDAY 19 JUNE 2017**

## Private Visit to Plywood Exhibition, Victoria and Albert Museum, London SW7

**THURSDAY 13 JULY 2017 4 PM**

*Plywood*, which opens at the Victoria and Albert Museum on 15 July, will be the first major exhibition on a material that has

shaped global histories of design and manufacture, from the 1850s to today. *Plywood* will bring together significant new research and over 150 objects — many of which have never been on public display before — to explore the huge and



Chair by Grete Jalk

surprising impact that this versatile material has had across many different fields of design. Members will enjoy a private tour of the exhibition prior to public opening led by Christopher Wilk, Curator of the exhibition and Keeper of the Furniture, Textiles & Fashion Department at the museum.

**COST: £25**

**LIMIT: 15 MEMBERS**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
MONDAY 26 JUNE 2017**

## **Visit to Knole House, Knole Park, Sevenoaks, Kent TN15 ORP**

**MONDAY 11 SEPTEMBER 2017  
10.30 AM–3.30 PM APPROX.**

Knole in Kent has been the seat of the Sackville family for more than 600 years. The house contains the largest collection of royal furniture outside the Royal

Collection, accumulated mainly by Lionel Cranfield, 1st Earl of Middlesex (1575–1645) and Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset (1638–1706), through their appointments at the Stuart Court. The collection is particularly rich in historic textiles and upholstered furniture (including the famous Knole sofa), some being rare survivals from Hampton Court and the now destroyed Palace of Whitehall. This special visit will comprise a tour of the state rooms and its important furnishings, the new Hayloft Learning Centre and conservation studio as well as the newly re-opened Gatehouse Tower, former home of novelist and music critic Eddy Sackville-West (1901–1965).

The visit will be led by Emma Slocombe and Wolf Burchard.

**COST: £55 (INCLUDING LUNCH)**

**LIMIT: 20 MEMBERS**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 14 JULY 2017**



# Private visit to Clarence House, The Mall, London SW1 1BA

MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2017  
5.30 PM–7 PM APPROX.

HRH The Prince of Wales has kindly given permission for the Society to visit Clarence House. The visit will comprise the ground-floor rooms, which house a number of important pieces from the Royal Collection. There will be an opportunity to

inspect some of the Chippendale seat furniture bought by the late Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, and probably originally supplied by Chippendale to Prince William Henry, Duke of Gloucester (1743–1805).

**COST: £30  
(INCLUDING DRINKS/SNACKS)**

**LIMIT: 15 MEMBERS**

**CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS:  
FRIDAY 14 JULY 2017**



Clarence House

# Overseas Events

## Study Trip to Barcelona

WEDNESDAY 27 SEPTEMBER –  
SUNDAY 1 OCTOBER 2017

Fernando Romero Simó, Dip. RSA, art consultant and long-standing FHS member, and Dr Melanie Doderer-Winkler are organizing this study trip with the support of the Asociación para el Estudio del Mueble (the equivalent in Spain of the FHS) and its President, furniture historian Dr Mónica Piera Miquel.

Of great interest will be the Fundación Privada Ramon Pla Armengol, which has opened its doors only recently to select groups and whose primary focus is the

comprehensive collection and study of sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Spanish furniture, silver and decorative arts.

Impressively, the collection comprises more than eight hundred pieces so far.

Other likely visits will include the Reial Monestir de Pedralbes (Royal Monastery of Pedralbes, a masterpiece of Catalan Gothic architecture, founded in 1326 and with a unique furniture collection given over the centuries to the order of Saint Clare), the Anfiteatro anatómico del Real Colegio de Cirujanos (a late eighteenth-century teaching amphitheatre for surgeons with the original rococo furniture and decorations), the eighteenth-century



The Anfiteatro anatómico del Real Colegio de Cirujanos



Palau Palmerola, Barcelona

frescos at the Palau Palmerola and the Palau Moja. The latter is the grandest palace of Barcelona and will require special permission to visit as it houses the Ministry of Culture of the Catalan Government.

The Museu del Disseny (Design Museum) opened in 2014 and is the new home to the collections of the former Museu de les Arts Decoratives, the Museu Textil I d'Indumentària and the Gabinet de les Arts Gràfiques. It should be possible not only to visit the museum itself but also the storage and restoration facilities.

The Museu Nacional d'Art de Catalunya is the city's largest museum, with a new display dedicated to the fine

and decorative arts of the Catalan Modernism movement (1888–1911) showing various works by Antoni Gaudí and Gaspar Homar, the most accomplished designer and cabinet-maker of his time.

Complementary to this is the Museo del Modernismo, a private museum with an extensive collection and where close access to the pieces should be possible.

Other mostly private visits in and outside Barcelona are in the planning.

Please contact the Events Secretary for more information and to register interest.

## FHS Grants

Grants available for FHS UK and Overseas Visits Including One-Day Visits  
The FHS Grants Committee now meet quarterly to consider all applications from members, to support their participation in **FHS foreign and UK study trips where the cost of a trip exceeds £45**. Please contact Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org) for further information and grant application forms.

# Other Notices

Please note that these events are not organized by the Furniture History Society. Information/booking instructions will be found under individual items.

## Conference: Micro and Other Mosaics

VICTORIA AND ALBERT MUSEUM,  
LONDON

SATURDAY 24 JUNE 2017  
10.30 AM–5.15 PM

Mosaics are pictures in pieces. Conjuring up images from small units has been a revered art from antiquity to the present



Flora of the Two Sicilies tabletop,  
Michelangelo Barberi, about 1850, Rome.  
Museum No. Loan: Gilbert 190-2008  
© The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert  
Collection on loan to the Victoria and  
Albert Museum, London

day. This conference will explore this versatile art form through the centuries. International speakers will introduce key themes of ancient masterpieces and explore the continuity and revival of the art form today.

For more details, see:

<https://www.vam.ac.uk/shop/whatson/index/view/id/4433/event/Micro-and-Other-Mosaics/dt/2017-06-24/eType/1/free/2>

## Exhibition: *Plywood*

VICTORIA AND ALBERT  
MUSEUM, LONDON

SATURDAY 15 JULY 2017 –  
SUNDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2017

*Plywood*, which opens at the V&A in July, will be the first major exhibition on a material that has shaped global histories of design and manufacture, from the 1850s to today. *Plywood* will bring together significant new research and over 150 objects — many of which have never been on public display before — to explore the huge and surprising impact that this versatile material has had across many different fields of design. The plywood technique, which consists of gluing together thin layers of cross-grained wood to create a very strong, flexible, light material, has been in use since ancient times. The exhibition will start in around 1850, when the widespread adoption of



Chair by Alvar Aalto

steam-powered veneer-cutting machines enabled the manufacture of plywood products on a much larger scale than ever before. Many of the most innovative plywood designs of the nineteenth century were by furniture-makers using moulded plywood. The exhibition will include important nineteenth-century examples.

The exhibition will look at plywood's extremely rich and experimental history in the twentieth century, showing influential modernist furniture by designers such as Alvar Aalto and Marcel Breuer alongside contemporary, related experiments with moulded plywood aeroplane design. Particularly important here is the British de Havilland Mosquito — the fastest, highest-flying aeroplane of World War II. Mosquitoes, made almost entirely of moulded plywood, were manufactured largely by woodworkers in furniture factories.

The huge importance of plywood to 1930s' and 1940s' architecture will be highlighted, including through loans from the Aalto Archive of Alvar and Aino Aalto's drawings for the Finnish Pavilion

at the 1939 New York World's Fair. In the post-war period, the use of plywood greatly expanded and, among other topics, the exhibition will demonstrate the huge influence of Charles and Ray Eames on 1950s and 1960s furniture design. New acquisitions of moulded plywood chairs designed by Sori Yanagi, Kenzo Tange, Grete Jalk and Osvaldo Borsani, among others, will be shown. Plywood has had a huge resurgence over the past fifteen years as a material for digital design, and the exhibition will finish with a section that highlights its use in open source design and maker spaces.

*Plywood*, curated by Christopher Wilk, will be at the V&A from 15 July to 12 November 2017.

A private visit to the *Plywood* Exhibition is scheduled, see 'Occasional Visits'.

## Lecture: Furniture of the Gilded Age

SPENCER HOUSE, 27 ST JAMES'S PLACE, LONDON SW1A 1NR  
MONDAY 18 SEPTEMBER 2017  
6.30 PM

The pinnacle of artistic and technical ability and unequalled in its quality, Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild's collection of French eighteenth-century furniture was assembled to furnish Waddesdon Manor.

Ulrich Leben will introduce pieces by the greatest chair-makers and *ébénistes* — Crescent, Riesener, Dubois and RVLC. Waddesdon's collection contains the most important single group of works by the royal cabinet-maker, Jean Henri Riesener; many originally created for the Palace at

Versailles. The Manor's furnished interiors also display the UK's most significant collection of furniture adorned with Sèvres porcelain plaques, remarkable in both their number and originality of their mounts and combinations.

Other highlights include lesser known, but equally rare, examples of painted and lacquered or carved French furniture.

Ulrich Leben is Associate Curator of Furniture at Waddesdon, Visiting Professor at Bard Graduate Centre, New York, and has recently published, *Empire Style: The Hôtel de Beauharnais in Paris*, with Jörg Ebeling.

The lecture will take place on Monday 18 September 2017 at 6.30pm. It will be followed by drinks and an opportunity to look at the restored fine eighteenth-century State Rooms at Spencer House.

See website for details:

<https://waddesdon.org.uk/whats-on/spencer-house-lecture-furniture-gilded-age-dr-ulrich-leben/>



Marquetry detail from Riesener commode

## Exhibition: Stroh zu Gold — Straw into Gold

FASANENSCHLÖSSEN (LITTLE PHEASANT CASTLE) IN THE GROUNDS OF SCHLOSS MORITZBURG, NEAR DRESDEN, GERMANY

1 MAY 2017–31 OCTOBER 2017

The recent conservation of a rare set of straw-work wall-hangings made for the Fasanenschlössen in about 1775 has prompted staff at Moritzburg to mount this exhibition, working with colleagues from the Straw Museum at Wohlen in Switzerland. Although the exhibition concentrates on the straw plait and hat-making industries, varieties of the technique were also used for wall decoration, screens and boxes. The technique itself is rare, and information on it is welcome. The exhibition is open until October and a catalogue will be published in May. See website for details:

<https://www.schloss-moritzburg.de/de/veranstaltungen-ausstellungen/detailseite/event/stroh-zu-gold-einmalige-kunsthandwerkliche-schaetze-aus-dem-strohmuseum-wohenschweiz/5173/>

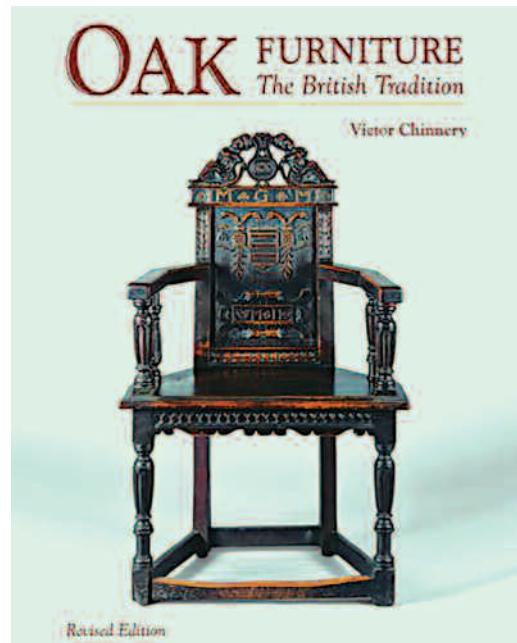
# Book Review

Suggestions for future reviews and publishers' review copies should be sent to Simon Swynfen Jervis, 45 Bedford Gardens, London w8 7EF (tel. 020 7727 8739, email: ss.jervis@btopenworld.com).

**VICTOR CHINNERY**, *Oak Furniture: The British Tradition. A History of Early Furniture in the British Isles and New England*, rev. edn (Woodbridge: ACC Art Books, 2016). 551 pp., 240 col., 861 b. & w. illus., 32 diagrams. ISBN 978-1-85149-715-7. £75

Published in 1979 when Chinnery was only thirty-five, *Oak Furniture* was commended for the Library Association's McColvin Medal as 'an outstanding reference book ... of the year'. The product of some five years when the Salisbury-based author and his wife, Janet, combined dealing in 'oak' with the study of private collections and church woodwork, it is the standard work on furniture of the middling classes c. 1520–1660 and on later joined furniture. After thirty-seven years in print, this is only the second edition (a pictorial index was added to the 1986 reprint). Victor Chinnery, a Regional Furniture Society founder in 1985, fundamentally shaped his field; he died lamentably young in 2015.

Physically larger (albeit slightly shorter), the new edition's structure is unchanged. A first chapter provides a potted social-economic description of Britain and its domestic furnishings



c. 1500–1720; relevant appendices contain extracts from William Harrison's *A Description of England* (1586), Randle Holme's *An Academie or Store House of Armory & Blazon* (1688 and later), Salisbury joiner Humphrey Beckham's life from *Antiquitates Sarisburienses* (1771), inventories of provincial woodworkers, a note on the British population in 1662 and an essay on collecting oak furniture. The longer chapters 2–4 constitute the book's core, addressing British furniture (with North American supplements) thematically: materials and techniques (2), typology (3) and decorative and regional styles (4), and this tripartite division (rather than a typological or chronological structure) holds good. Chinnery's readable

approach (reminiscent of Fred Roe's hands-on style) contrasts with connoisseurial precursors such as Cescinsky and Gribble, or R. W. Symonds. He secured extensive photographic illustrations, and clear structural diagrams. As photographs of all furniture types appear throughout, the pictorial index is essential for locating specific examples. Laudably, text and illustrations are closely aligned, making his argument easy to follow, most images serving as examples without detailed analysis. Occasionally, a long caption highlights some feature, lending a piece greater resonance. Thanks to this text-book approach to illustration, *Oak Furniture* reads as a series of confidently and engagingly delivered slide lectures, echoing Chinnery's teacher training, and intended, in part, to help 'the budding connoisseur' learn wide territory quickly. The narrative flow is highly effective, but may disappoint readers wanting detail: 'but how do we know?'. The lack of fresh references derived from the author's lifelong research and from dendrochronology unavailable in 1979, and the bibliography's omission of many articles published later, in *Furniture History* and *Regional Furniture*, for example, are regrettable. An expanded index would allow readers to mine the text, full of insight, more fruitfully. Chinnery's range does not permit extensive detail about individual pieces, and readers are instructed on the first page not to expect more than 'the basic principles' and to 'get to grips with the real thing' by handling as much furniture as possible. Chinnery might have justified this approach by the expectation that new furniture catalogues

of major collections — the Burrell Collection, the National Trust (almost entirely absent from the book) and the V&A — would appear. But none has emerged and only recently has precise information about individual pieces started to become available online.

Apart from its text-book role, the usefulness of *Oak Furniture* is twofold: it assembles a mass of information from secondary sources available in 1979, alongside Chinnery's own research, for example into Salisbury furniture; and its illustrations, from museums and private collections, constitute a substantial visual archive. Many more, good colour images are an attraction in this new edition, and the improved clarity of its black-and-white photographs is transformative. While page numbers have changed, figure numbers usefully remain the same. Unfortunately, the addition or replacement of some images exacerbates the original problem of the captions: that ownership could only be found by searching photographic credits. Some images now have more than one photo credit, others none: captioning all (rather than very few) institutional owners would be a great improvement, as these are pieces that readers can examine for themselves.

Naturally, opinions on authenticity evolve and differ, a process fostered by *Oak Furniture*. (The V&A 'dresser' dated 1659, illustrated as genuine (fig. 4:53) but condemned by Peter Thornton (*The Burlington Magazine*, cxxii (1980), 774–75), is now published online as authentic.) Readers may often agree with Chinnery's general point while suspending judgement on a piece, although his assessments seem

remarkably reliable when so much early furniture is compromised or idiosyncratic. A broader aspect of the illustrations was emphasized in his 1979 preface: 'kinship groups must be a significant factor in any objective study of early furniture typology. Very few pieces are unique to any great extent'. Equally, superficially identical handmade furniture always show small differences. Assembling images of analogous pieces, as *Oak Furniture* does repeatedly, may seem profligate, but materially assists the reader to grasp both consistent and varying elements. More

fundamentally, by defining types and their key features, this method provides a solid basis for assessment, when supplemented by analysis of modifications, identification of design sources and the charting of documentary references. *Oak Furniture*'s comprehensive breadth and pragmatic judgements remain a valuable resource for beginners and experienced readers. In the future, studies of single furniture types will develop the field, but *Oak Furniture* is still a keystone for new scholarship.

NICK HUMPHREY

# Reports on the Society's Events

Members will have noticed that the new *Newsletter* includes many more photographs than before. The Editor would be grateful if members could send **high quality digital photographs, 1 MB minimum**, taken during Society visits and events that can be used to illustrate the reports.

## Madrid

11–15 JUNE 2016

The following is a résumé of the detailed report to be published in the August *Newsletter*.

This study trip focused on exploring the eighteenth-century artistic heritage of the Spanish capital and the royal country seats where the court resided during the seasons (the so-called *jornadas*): Aranjuez, El Pardo and El Escorial.

With our usual special emphasis on the furnishings and decorations of these royal residences, very privileged access to outstanding works produced at the royal workshops was granted. Masterpieces of the rococo (Charles III) were studied up-close, including suites of furniture by José Canops and decorative schemes designed by Mattia Gasparini. The extraordinary quality of later works produced under the patronage of the Prince of Asturias (later Charles IV) could be observed at his richly decorated country houses, the *casitas*. They reveal the evolution of his tastes with

largely surviving original furnishings and silk hangings (mostly Lyonese). His outstandingly finely worked marquetry cabinets at the Escorial, the Habitaciones de maderas finas, are preserved in pristine condition but rarely opened even to experts. The group also had the privilege to be amongst the very few to have gained access to the luxurious mahogany panelled cabinet attributed to Jean-Démosthène Dugourc. Originally designed as the private office of Manuel Godoy, Charles IV's First Secretary of State, it is now used by the Admiral General and Chief of Staff of the Spanish Navy.

Particular gratitude is due to Patrimonio Nacional, the Spanish royal collections, for granting us exceptional access to areas normally not open to the public in the company of their experts. We are equally indebted to Sofía Rodríguez Bernis, Director of the Museo Nacional de Artes Decorativas, and Mercedes Simal López for their support and expert guidance.

DANIELA HEINZE

## Suffolk

14–16 OCTOBER 2016

Our first visit was to St Peter and St Paul, Lavenham, built by John de Vere, Earl of Oxford to celebrate the Tudor victory at Bosworth 1485, with support from local merchants. Thomas Spring gave £200 towards building the tower and a chantry

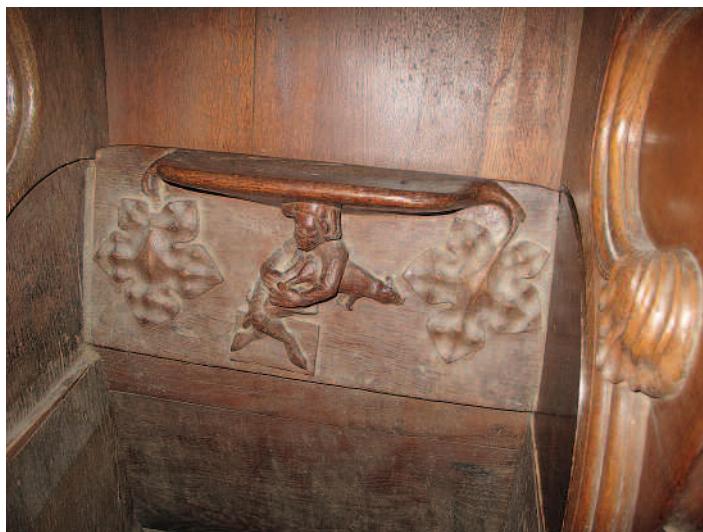
chapel; Simon Branch built the Holy Trinity chapel. The chancel screen and series of misericords were well preserved.

Melford Hall has been a property of the National Trust since 1960. Originally owned by the Abbots of St Edmundsbury, on the dissolution of the monasteries Melford was leased to the lawyer, Sir William Cordell (1539–81). The Hall passed to Cordell's wife's great-nephew, Sir Thomas Savage. Badly damaged in the Civil War, the Hall passed back to the Cordell and Firebrace families; Sir Cordell Firebrace updated the interior from 1727, adding Georgian sash windows to the north front. Melford was sold to Sir Harry Hyde Parker (1769–1830), who brought the portraits owned by Vice-Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, his grandfather. Between 1813 and 1820, the house was refurbished to designs by Thomas Hopper, who opened up the two-storey great hall, installing a grand staircase.

In the Entrance Hall, a suite of Charles II chairs and two sixteenth-century 'Nonsuch' chests, and in the fireplace sixteenth-century Flemish andirons, were

captured in a watercolour by Beatrix Potter, who often stayed here. Lady Ulla Hyde Parker repainted the Chippendale-period mirror and two pier tables in the 1950s from the Dining Room, which was destroyed in the fire of 1942. The adjoining Blue Drawing Room escaped the fire, its panelling and rococo chimneypiece intact. A rare, early, seaweed-marquetry year-going longcase clock was signed by Richard Street, Free of the Clockmakers' Company from 1687. Glued inside the case door are eighteenth-century notes recording annual winding.

The Library, divided by Ionic *scagliola* columns, is furnished in the fashionable Greek revival style by Hopper. Paint scrapings revealed the colour of the original pink-washed walls, now recreated. Furniture designed by Hopper, made by Morant & Co., and Gillows, harmonizes with the oak bookcases and dado, with their strips and panels of yew wood veneer and dark-stained walnut stringing. Four sabre-leg armchairs are carved with owls' masks on the armrests



Misericord, oak, carved with a farmer with a pig under his arms, fifteenth century, St Peter and St Paul, Lavenham, Suffolk

(symbolizing wisdom); the backs and seats are upholstered in green morocco. A pair of scroll-ended 'Grecian Couches' by Morant have eagle supports (symbolizing victory). Payments of £700 to Morant & Co., and over £100 to Gillows of Lancaster, are recorded in Sir William Parker's bank account for 1812–15. The room is hung with naval victories of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker by Serres, and a portrait of the Admiral by Romney.

Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich, on the site of Holy Trinity Augustinian Priory, was built in 1547–50 by Edmund Withypool. It passed through the Devereux family and was bought by the Huguenot Claude Fonnereau in the early 1730s, a wealthy London merchant trading with Hamburg. Sold in 1882 to a syndicate, one member Felix Cobbold, a local brewer, bought the house and presented it to Ipswich Corporation, with an endowment to buy art and furniture.

The panelling in the Hall, painted to imitate expensive stone, includes recesses for classical sculpture introduced in the 1740s. We noted an Italian cedar chest, two chests of drawers, one chest with printed lining paper, c. 1662, with figures of Charles II and Catherine of Braganza, a longcase clock signed by Thomas Moore of Ipswich, encased with prints 'Night Amusement' and 'Mirth and Friendship' and a two-tier cupboard in the manner of Hugues Sambin, French, sixteenth century.

The Green Drawing Room has original wallpaper hung 'on the drop', that is, each width staggered to vary the pattern, and a marble chimneypiece attributed to Anglo-Danish sculptor Charles Stanley (1703–61), with a veiled head brought from Italy by

Thomas Fonnereau. A Roman marble inlaid table slab, supported on a giltwood base possibly designed by Henry Flitcroft, is adjacent to a pair of chairs made after designs by William Kent. A set of six black walnut chairs from 1735–45, with extravagant splats and knees elaborately carved with foliated cartouches, are from the Ernest Cook collection. The Dining Room walnut tallboy and matching chest of drawers are inlaid with horses' teeth.

In the main bedroom, the alcove, with the Fonnereau coat of arms above, is a French feature. The contemporary bed is from Belhus in Essex. A reconstructed wing incorporates a timber-framed house from Major's Corner, Ipswich, and an overmantel from the house of James Eldred, who circumnavigated the world in 1586–88. A carving from Sir Humphrey Wingfield's house in Tacket Street represents the marriage of Wingfield's relative, Charles Brandon, to Mary Tudor, the widow of the King of France, in 1515.

A doll's house, with furniture made by an Ipswich resident from cigar boxes given to Sir Winston Churchill, toured the



Chest of drawers (detail) walnut inlaid with horses' teeth, mid-eighteenth century, Dining Room, Christchurch Mansion, Ipswich

country during the Second World War to raise money for the troops. Chairs constructed with elm seats and cherry and yew backs were made by Mr Day, c. 1800, in the village of Mendlesham.

St Mary of the Assumption, Ufford, enlarged in the early thirteenth century, was completed in the first half of the fifteenth century. The roof timbers retain much of their original colouring, with the sacred monograms IHS and MR on reddish-brown wood rafters. The late fifteenth-century 18-foot baptismal font cover is surmounted by a Pelican in her Piety. The finest bench ends with Saints Catherine and Margaret were shown in the V&A 2003/4 exhibition, *Gothic: Art for England 1400 to 1547*. St Agnes, St Agatha, St Brigida, St Cecilia, St Fides and St Florence are painted on the chancel screen. The Chapel of St Leonard was designed by Ninian Comper (1864–1960) in 1919 as a memorial to parishioners who died in the Great War.

Otley Hall dates from the fifteenth century, but was largely rebuilt in 1512, the timber dating confirmed through dendrochronology. The house was occupied by the Gosnolds, lawyers in Tudor times. As Royalist sympathizers during the Civil War they were forced to sell in 1674. Bartholomew Gosnold led the first recorded European expedition to Cape Cod in 1607 and is considered the prime mover of the colonization of Virginia.

In 2007, made-to-measure Mendlesham chairs by Finewood (Mr Lane, a Suffolk man) were made to mark the 400th anniversary of Gosnold's voyage to the New World. They were made from American cherry and burr elm, one carved in relief with *The Godspeed*.

The Parlour linenefold panelling is carved with pens, paintbrushes, flutes, scrolls and scalpels representing arts, music, law and medicine. The White Wing was built by Robert Gosnold III in 1588 for use as a play house. Shakespeare's Lord Chamberlain's Men visited Ipswich on more than one occasion and may have performed at Otley.

begun in 1480. Two working drawbridges, raised every night since 1510, cross the 60-foot wide moat. During the seventeenth century, the Tollemaches rose from the baronetcy, awarded in 1611 under James I, to the Earldom awarded by Charles I and confirmed after the Restoration by Charles

Elizabeth Joyce; their joint coat of arms features inside and outside the church.

The chancel was 'classicized' in the mid-eighteenth century by Lionel, 4th Earl of Dysart, and further altered by Anthony Salvin in 1840. The biblical quotations were commissioned by the evangelical lady Georgina Louisa, first wife of 1st Lord Tollemache, and together with the oak altar table and stools, date from the period when John Charles Rye was rector (he later became Bishop of Liverpool in 1880). The church is rich in memorials to the Tollemache family, cleaned and renovated in 1976 in memory of John, 4th Baronet.

St John the Baptist, Lounds, is in the watery margins of Norfolk and Suffolk. The round-towered church with aisle-less nave and chancel was restored in the nineteenth century. Then, under the Revd Mr Booth Lynes (1908–17), J. Ninian Comper furnished it as if for Anglo-Catholic worship. A sort of 'pop-up' neo-medieval interior — with a high altar for the Sarum Rite Mass, a working rood screen with angels and dragons in addition to the rood figures and a font cover (a busy spire luxuriating into tracery and spirelets) — is housed under a bream spanning the nave (1911). The side-altarpiece is painted in Fra Angelico-like colours: pinks, blues and golds, and the high altar retains its hangings of 1911. The organ case (1914) closes up the tower door and occupies the whole of the west wall.

The interior of Herringfleet Church was refitted in the 1820s. Its thatched roof and very early Norman circular tower belie the interior. The early Gothic revival pews, pulpit and panelling are remarkable. There is a small Baroque organ in the gallery and

St Mary's Church, Helmingham, was built by Lionel Tollemache (d. 1552), High Sheriff of Norfolk and Suffolk, the flint tower commissioned by John Tollemache in 1490 to celebrate his marriage to



The side altarpiece designed by Ninian Comper, 1911, St John the Baptist, Lounds

important early glass from many different sources pieced together in the windows.

Somerleyton Hall is a grand Victorian building, encasing a Jacobean house of c. 1610, which was bought and remodelled in the mid-nineteenth century by the important Victorian building contractor (and, later, MP for Norwich), Sir Morton Peto; his architect was the stonemason, carver and sculptor, John Thomas. In 1863, after the decline in Peto's fortune, the house and much of the furniture was sold and subsequently purchased by Sir Francis Crossley, the Halifax carpet manufacturer, whose family have lived there ever since.

## Apter-Fredericks

12 JANUARY 2017

On a damp and cold January morning, Guy and Harry Apter offered us a very warm welcome along with tea and biscuits in stunning surroundings accommodating a display of important English furniture. Anne-Marie Bannister introduced the group and welcomed some new members, informing us that Apter-Fredericks have been trading from this site for seventy years. Guy led the tour, inviting us to offer our own opinions and not to be too shy to raise questions.

We started by examining a very fine chinoiserie bureau bookcase, one of five that are known by the same as yet unidentified maker, which provided us with an object lesson in the ageing process of japanning. Guy demonstrated the difference in appearance between the interior (less exposed to the ageing process) and exterior drawers, the interior being much fresher looking, including a number of secret drawers. The red was drawn to our attention within the decoration, leading one's eye around the entire design. Guy felt that this piece had not undergone too much restoration, although the cresting was not original. The

question arose, 'What is the difference between lacquer and japanning?'. Guy was joined by Sarah Medlam in explaining that lacquer was made from a tree sap in Asia and could not be made in Europe. Instead, imitation japanning in the western European countries was made up from a series of varnishes, and often the grain remained visible, which led us to appreciate this piece in finer detail.

Our attention was then drawn to a rosewood bookcase, c. 1810, influenced by Thomas Hope. Both the upper section and the bottom comprised of glass doors, thought to have been made for a collector to display his collection to the best of its advantage. Apart from fine proportions, the sides were of exceptional quality veneers, indicating that there was no question of expense spared in the making of this fine piece.

We were then shown the Leinster House cabinets, made for the 2nd Duke of Leinster in satinwood (c. 1775). These were magnificent museum-quality examples of eighteenth-century English cabinet-making. The pair of corner commodes, with ormolu rams' heads in the centre panel, being decorated in the classical Etruscan style with a fine, light and detailed feel to them, a style popular in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, were much favoured by the patrons who had visited Italy on the Grand Tour.

A fine mahogany writing table by John Syers, one of only four made, was of great interest and thoroughly examined. The interesting aspect of this piece was the construction of the drawers, incorporating flush panelling. This piece was previously sold by Norman Adams.

Guy pointed out an exceptional Pembroke table by Henry Hill of Marlborough (c. 1770), this piece, upon fluted legs, having an unusually shaped top with parquetry inlay and a fine panel in the centre. This is thought to be one of the best examples of Hill's work. Henry Hill's success may be measured, not just by the numerous commissions to supply furniture to grand west country houses, but also by the work he carried out for London houses.

The tour concluded by looking at Lord Hesketh's circular bookcase from Easton Neston (c. 1820), possibly made by Mack, Williams and Gibton. The bookcase had vertical divisions that locked to hold retaining bars in place to secure the books. Each tier revolved independently from the others. This was a unique piece, creating great interest and intrigue for all of us.

The group, of course, also had the opportunity to inspect other pieces of fine English furniture.

The vote of thanks was given by David Wurtzel who thanked Guy and Harry for their kind hospitality and for an informative, inspiring and privileged morning.

PAUL BRUCE

## Arnold Wiggins & Sons

7 MARCH 2017

On this first FHS visit to Arnold Wiggins & Sons of Bury Street, London, we were welcomed by director Michael Gregory. After art school, Michael trained as a carver and gilder alongside Jim Wiggins. He now maintains the Wiggins family's longstanding tradition of assisting museums and collectors in selecting

historically accurate frames for their pictures.

Arnold Wiggins & Sons have been framing pictures and dealing in antique frames since the 1920s, when the family business began. Arnold Wiggins was an apprentice to his grandfather, and specialized in making reproduction Chippendale furniture. His sons, Jim and Ted Wiggins, later joined the family firm, which began to specialize in picture frames in the inter-war period.

The firm now holds an extensive and growing collection of frames, ranging from the very small to large gallery frames. The collection provides models for reproduction frames, which are designed on the premises. Michael explained that a painting's frame can be crucial in creating a sense of historical context in a museum, as original frames relate paintings to their original interiors. However, a choice must be made between reframing a painting for the sake of chronological consistency, and retaining the particular sense of provenance that later frames convey.

The current display in Bury Street features auricular frames, inspired by the Wallace Collection conference on this topic of October 2016. The display contrasts Medici, Dutch and English frames, allowing the viewer to appreciate national differences in application of the soft, flowing auricular style.

Among these are the remarkable Fire Judge frames, nine of which were sold to Arnold Wiggins in 1952. Gerry Alabone, Senior Conservator at the National Trust's Knole Conservation Studio, gave us the benefit of his expertise, having studied the frames closely. They were commissioned

by the City in 1670, to frame portraits of the twenty-two Fire Judges who presided over the 'Fire Court', to be hung in the Guildhall as a memorial to their service. The fire court had been established to settle land disputes in the city, and therefore enable quick rebuilding after the Great Fire of London.

The frames are an excellent example of the auricular fashion of the time, and are known as Sunderland frames in England. Their size is such that they cannot be assembled in the shop. The first frame was carved by John Norris, and the rest by four other workshops, presumably following Norris's initial model. It is not known how the pattern moved between workshops, and we were able to observe signs of different carvers' hands in the examples on display.

To conclude a fascinating evening, we were treated to a detailed overview of historical and cultural differences in the design of frames. An opportunity to handle a variety of frames proved instructive, and was greatly appreciated by the group.

Thank you to Michael and Gerry for sharing their knowledge, and to Declan and Nadine of Wiggins & Sons for their hospitality. Gerry's paper on the Fire Judge frames will soon be published on Lynn Roberts' 'The Frame Blog'.

ELENA PORTER

## Blythe House

2 MARCH 2017

Our visit to the V&A stores at Blythe House aimed to educate us in three techniques — inlay, marquetry and

veneering — and the development of these from the sixteenth to the twenty-first century. We were welcomed by Nick Humphrey who gave us a brief introduction to these ancient decorative techniques, which are closely related and sometimes combined.

According to the V&A,

Veneers are thinly sawn sheets, usually wood, glued onto the carcase, while marquetry is a decorative 'jigsaw' of veneers. To save time, intricate patterns can be replicated by cutting out motifs in batches. Inlay is the insetting of individual cut-out motifs into the solid wood 'ground'. All three techniques require precision-cutting of richly decorative woods and materials such as shell or metal. They also need glues, especially if the surfaces are curved.

The party was split into two smaller groups. Our group worked almost chronologically, beginning by looking at a decorative German cabinet dating to around 1560 (museum no. W.24-1931). This cabinet employed the use of marquetry to form motifs of classical ruins, consisting of different species of woods. Techniques discussed included the use of sand singeing to create the deeply three-dimensional *chiaroscuro*, as well as the use of *rollwerk*, a typical German form of decoration. An interesting fact that seemed new to most was that the vibrant green wood was not always dyed, but could be poplar wood infected by the *chlorosplenium* fungi, and was a material commonly employed in German furniture of this date. Cabinets such as these were not only functional pieces but also a decorative focal point of the sixteenth-century interior.

Then we turned our attention to the nineteenth century, guided by Max

Donnelly. Firstly, we looked at a mid-nineteenth-century table of Elizabethan-revival style, labelled by the maker, Blake & Co. of Mount Street, London (museum no. W.20-1995). This table was commissioned by the 1st Baron Methuen for Corsham Court, most likely for a sitting room or bedroom. With solid ebony turnings to the base, the top was quarter-veneered in sycamore with floral marquetry to the top. The floral decoration was similar in design to porcelain paintings of the time. Next was a beautiful and intricately ivory-inlaid and rosewood-veneered side table, probably designed by G. J. S. Lock for Collinson & Lock, and dating to c. 1890 (museum no. W.32-1954). The table was of early eighteenth-century form and the ivory decoration inspired by the Renaissance using arabesques, putti, birds and acanthus. The detail on this piece was extraordinarily delicate.

Kirsty Hassard then showed the group a mysterious rosewood, walnut and tulipwood chair, dating to c. 1860–75, perhaps Swedish in origin, which was finely inlaid with engraved pewter (museum no. W.13-1989). The frame was stamped twice for Carl P. Svensson, who was a retailer and also the upholsterer to the Swedish Royal Court. The chair was one of a set of fourteen commissioned by Lars Olsson Smith, the founder of Absolut vodka, for Bolinder House in Stockholm. The design of the chair is unusual for this period in Sweden, and it is possible that Svensson imported the chairs from Germany for sale in Stockholm.

The group then went back in time to the early eighteenth century, looking at a small writing table dating to c. 1710 (museum no.

W.15-1959). This walnut table employed the use of seaweed/arabesque marquetry on the front and table top. There was some use of the singeing technique used on the leafy bands as well as some chevron banding utilized not only as decoration but also to protect the edge of the table, preventing it from chips and knocks.

Moving on to France, Sarah Medlam showed us one of a pair of *encoignures* by Jean-François Oeben dating to the early 1760s (museum nos 1114&A-1882). Oeben was the Royal cabinet-maker in Paris, known for marquetry and gadgetry/mechanical pieces. The frieze and piers were inlaid with green-stained burr-ash, which was used to imitate green marble tops. There was an interest in botany in the eighteenth century, which meant that there were many anatomically correct images of flowers available at this time. The *marqueteur* composed these lilies in the manner of Louis Tessier, the noted draughtsman and painter of flowers. These marquetry flower patterns could be mass-produced and laid-down in mirror image. The detail to these flowers was enhanced by further engraving.

We were also showed a mechanical dressing table/*poudreuse* of Oeben design, which dated to c. 1770 (museum no. W.89-1924). Again, the marquetry was finished with engraving and penwork to highlight details. The colour of the timbers on the interiors of pieces such as this have been protected from the elements, and therefore appear much more vivid, giving us a glimpse into how the exterior might have looked in the eighteenth century.

The next piece to examine was a commode, attributed to John Cobb, from the 1770s (museum no. W.30-1937). This was French in style and, again, was supplied to Corsham Court. The top was inlaid with a pineapple inside an oval, harking back to *pietra dura* of the past. Ovals were typical of Cobb's decoration, but the pineapple was a particularly exotic addition at the time. The back of the top overhangs, allowing for a dado rail, a seemingly English attribute. One feature that was particularly interesting to look at here was the loss of penwork detail as a result of scraping down the surface in an attempt to reveal the original colours, which were fugitive and faded quickly.

We were also treated to a quick look at a masterpiece in marquetry by Roentgen (museum no. 1076-1882). The marquetry panels dated to the 1770s, and were later added to a nineteenth-century French table.

Onto the twentieth century, Elisabeth Murray showed us the use of burr-walnut veneers on a cabinet by Maurice Adams Ltd, dating to 1928 (museum no. W.49-1934). Burr-walnut was popular in the 1930s and 1940s. Burr woods are not stable, so they have to be used in veneer. The curve of this form means the veneer is uninterrupted. This is aided by the clever use of mortising to prevent movement and create shape. The veneers are book-matched (a mirror image of one another). The edges to the cabinet were mitred, so the edges of the veneers are not as visible. We all learnt a new word for plywood, which makes up the carcase of this cabinet — laminated gaboon. In 1934, shortly after its manufacture, this piece was accessioned to the V&A.

We also looked at a fascinating large tray, made in 1913, by Henri Gaudier-Brzeska, depicting two wrestlers (museum no. W.30-1978). Johanna Agerman-Ross, recently appointed curator for twentieth-century and contemporary furniture, told us it was designed by Gaudier-Brzeska, and made by the craftsman John Joseph Callenborn in the Omega workshops. The marquetry scene depicted shows obvious influence from the Vorticism movement.

Finally, and perhaps the most unusual-looking of the pieces seen, was 'The Cinderella Table'. Designed by Jeroen Verhoeven in 2005 (museum no. W.1-2006),

the form was manufactured using computer-aided design (CAD). This table is one of an edition of twenty. This was a wonderful juxtaposition of old and new, combining the traditional technique of veneering with modern technology. The fluid form takes inspiration from classical eighteenth-century designs, with the outlines of a commode morphing into the outline of a table as your eyes move from one end to another. It was created by veneering fifty-seven layers of birch plywood together to build this sculptural form.

Our tour through the history of these techniques was concluded by a browsing session looking at all different styles of embellishment, from prisoner-of-war straw-work to a 1980s bowl, from ivory-inlaid tortoiseshell to sand-singed ecclesiastical panels from the beginning of the sixteenth century. For the museum numbers of pieces examined during this session, please see below.

The tour was a fascinating insight into the techniques used throughout the last five hundred years to decorate furniture and objects. We are very grateful to all the staff at the V&A for sharing their passion for their subject areas and giving us an incredibly educational and enjoyable behind-the-scenes visit to Blythe House.

CELIA HARVEY AND LILY FABER

Museum numbers for browsing session:  
2422-1856, 2158-1855, 2393-1855, 2716-1856, 7399-1860, CIRC.360-1976, W.42-1926, W.17-1985, 2002-1900, 235-1887, 670-1878, W.52-1940, W.9-1915.

# The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund and Oliver Ford Trust

The Tom Ingram Memorial Fund makes grants towards travel and other incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research into the history of furniture (a) whether or not the applicant is a member of the Society; (b) only when the study or research is likely to be of importance in furthering the objectives of the Society; and (c) only when travel could not be undertaken without a grant from the Society. Applications towards the cost of FHS foreign and domestic trips and study weekends are particularly welcome from scholars. Successful applicants are required to acknowledge the assistance of the Fund in any resulting publications and must report back to the Panel on completion of the travel or project. All enquiries should be addressed to Jo Norman at [grants@furniturehistorysociety.org](mailto:grants@furniturehistorysociety.org), or for further information and grant application forms see the Grants page of the Society's website, [www.furniturehistorysociety.org](http://www.furniturehistorysociety.org).

In line with one of its roles — the promotion of interest in interior design —

the Oliver Ford Trust has generously expressed the desire to sponsor a place on each FHS study weekend or foreign tour. Applicants should either be a student with a particular interest in interiors, or a junior museum professional. Applications from non-members will be considered. Grants will be awarded via the Tom Ingram Fund, to which candidates should apply.

The FHS Grants Committee now meets quarterly to consider all grant applications, either for independent travel/incidental expenses for the purpose of study or research, or for participation in FHS foreign and UK study trips.

Completed application forms should be submitted, with current curriculum vitae, by the following deadlines so that they can be considered at these meetings: **10 JUNE, 10 SEPTEMBER OR 10 DECEMBER**

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# Copy Deadline

The deadline for receiving material to be published in the next *Newsletter* is 15 June. Copy should be sent, preferably by email, to Sharon Goodman,

email: [sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:sctgoodman@yahoo.co.uk), or by post to 26 Burntwood Lane, London SW17 0JZ. Tel. 07855 176779.

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